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Message Text

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12
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 AID-05 /061 W
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R 020828Z JAN 75
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9468
INFO CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT DECREES JANUARY 30 REFERENDUM

REF: MANILA 13210

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS DECREED THAT NATIONAL REFERENDUM WILL TAKE PLACE JANUARY 30 VIA CITIZEN ASSEMBLIES (BARANGAYS). SUBJECT(S) NOT YET ANNOUNCED BUT OFFICIALLY INSPIRED PRESS COVERAGE INDICATES POPULACE MAY BE ENCOURAGED TO CRITICIZE LOCAL OFFICIALDOM. END SUMMARY

1. IN NEW YEAR'S EVE DECREE PRESIDENT MARCOS ANNOUNCED THAT NATIONAL REFERENDUM WILL BE HELD JANUARY 30 ON "MATTERS OF URGENT NATIONAL IMPORTANCE," WHICH HE DID NOT SPECIFY. ACCORDING HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE (TEXT OF DECREE NOT YET AVAILABLE) COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH FORMULATING QUESTION OR QUESTIONS TO BE PRESENTED AND WILL ALSO SUPERVISE AND ADMINISTER REFERENDUM.

2. FOLLOWING MEETING UNDER CHAIRMAN LEONARDO PEREZ COMELEC ANNOUNCED IT BEGINNING "WHIRLWIND TOUR" OF REGIONS
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TO CONSULT WITH BARANGAY OFFICIALS AND OTHERS ABOUT

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QUESTIONS. COMELEC APPEALED TO CITIZENRY TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS RE QUESTIONS AND ANNOUNCED INSTALLATION OF SUGGESTION BOXES, SPECIAL TELEPHONE LINES, ETC. FOR THIS PURPOSE. CHAIRMAN PEREZ ALSO ORDERED "MASSIVE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN" TO MAKE BARANGAY MEMBERS AWARE OF QUESTIONS (ONCE THESE DETERMINED) AND INSURE HEAVY TURNOUT FOR REFERENDUM.

3. PRESS COVERAGE WHICH OBVIOUSLY HEWING CLOSELY TO OFFICIAL GUIDANCE IS SUGGESTING THAT MAJOR TOPIC WILL BE "BACKSLIDING"LOCAL OFFICIALS, NOTING THAT MARCOS HIMSELF RECENTLY EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH PERFORMANCE OF GREATER MANILA OFFICIALS IN IMPLEMENTING NEW SOCIETY REFORMS. BULLETIN TODAY SPECULATES THAT SHOULD REFERENDUM REVEAL "SMOULDERING POPULAR DISCONTENT" RE LOCAL OFFICIALS, PRESIDENT MIGHT CALL NATIONAL ELECTION FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS FROM VILLAGE TO PROVINCIAL LEVEL.

COMMENT: PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED LAST NOVEMBER THAT HE EXPECTED REFERENDUM IN JANUARY 1975 (AND EVERY JANUARY THEREAFTER) BY WHICH PEOPLE WOULD JUDGE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD (REFTEL). FACT THAT "BACKSLIDING" LOCAL OFFICIALS EMERGING AS PROBABLE SUBJECT INDICATES THAT GOVERNMENT MAY AGAIN BE CONSIDERING TYPE OF EXERCISE ORIGINALLY CONTEMPLATED FOR CANCELLED SEPTEMBER 1 PULONG NG BARANGAY-- I.E., OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO EXPRESS GRIVANCES AGAINST LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AS OPPOSED TO PURELY COSMETIC EXPRESSION OF APPROVAL FOR GENERAL PRINCIPALS OF NEW SOCIETY. WHILE "CRITICISMS" WILL NO DOUBT BE SUBJECT TO HEAVY CONSTRAINTS FROM ABOVE, THIS COURSE (IF FOLLOWED) WILL ENTAIL SOME RISK OF REVIVING "OLD SOCIETY" INFIGHTING BETWEEN COMPETING FACTIONS OF LOCAL ELITES. IF REFERENDUM PRODUCES HEAVY "VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE" IN LOCAL LEADERS, RESULTS MIGHT BE USED TO LEGITIMIZE WIDESPREAD REPLACEMENT OF PRESENT OFFICIALS, PRESUMABLY BY APPOINTMENT. DESPITE PRESS SPECULATION, WE FIND IT UNLIKELY THAT MARCOS WOULD CONTEM-PLATE HOLDING LOCAL ELECTIONS IN WHICH COMPETITION GENUINE. SULLIVAN

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